(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when it is expected to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (c) No, Sir persons with disability including those belonging to the minorities are eligible for reservation under the Provisions of the Persons with Disability (Equal opportunities, Full Participation and Protection of Rights) Act, 2005 in admission to public institutions.

Regulating distance and Online Education

3612. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether, in an effort to regulate distance and online education in the country, the Ministry sought Cabinet's approval to set up a statutory body to monitor courses being provided by the foreign universities/colleges through Internet;

(b) whether the Ministry has prepared a draft law to provide legal backing to Distance Education Council;

(c) whether a Parliamentary Standing Committee has recommended that the Council should be an independent regulatory body and that the Council would be an apex body for obtaining approval for all forms of distance education modes; and

(d) if so, by when a final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (d) The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development in its 172nd & 202nd Reports has recommended to give Distance Education Council (DEC) an independent statutory status. Accordingly, a proposal to establish an independent statutory body for promotion, coordination, determination and regulation of standards in the open and distance education system, which includes on-line education, is in an advanced stage of consideration. This statutory body is lso proposed to be empowered to regulate the entry and operation of foreign distance education providers; and

Vacant posts in Supreme Court and High Courts

3613. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of vacant posts of Judges in the Supreme Court of India and various High Courts at present;

(b) the details of vacant posts that have been filled-up during the last two years; and

(c) the steps taken to fill up the existing vacant poasts?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) and (b) A Statement is enclosed (*See* below)

(c) Pursuant to the Supreme Court Judgment of October 6, 1993 read with their Advisory Opinion of October 28, 1998, the process of initiation of proposal for appointment of Judges of a High Court lies with the Chief Justice of that High Court. The Government has been requesting the Chief Justices of the High Courts, from time to time, to initiate proposals for filling up of the present vacancies as well as the vacancies anticipated during the next six months.

Statement

Detail of Vacant posts of judges in High Courts and Supreme Court

S.No.	Court	Vacancies as on 16.4.2008	Number of vacant posts filled during 16.4.2006 and 15.4.2008
	SUPREME COURT	01	08
	HIGH COURTS		
1.	Allahabad	27	02
2.	Andhra Pradesh	08	04
3.	Bombay	01	22
4.	Calcutta	10	16
5.	Chhattisgarh	01	01
6.	Delhi	00	18
7.	Gauhati	02	08
8.	Gujarat	11	04
9.	Himachal Pradesh	00	06
10.	Jammu & Kashmir	03	02
11.	Jharkhand	03	00
12.	Karnataka	02	07
13.	Kerala	03	07
14.	Madhya Pradesh	00	07
15.	Madras	01	16
16.	Orissa	01	06
17.	Patna	04	13
18.	Punjab & Haryana	00	13
19.	Rajasthan	04	11
20.	Sikkim	01	00
21.	Uttarakhand	01	01
	TOTAL:	83	164

Retirement cycle of MLCs in Karnataka

3614. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a proposal of the Karnataka Government for the restoration of cycle of retirement of the Members of Legislative Council for the Local Authorities Constituencies, every two years, has been pending with Government since 1994, for a decision; and